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Monday, March 5, 2018





Opinion Roundup

Monday, March 6, 2018 -- A round up of opinion, commentary and analysis on: Arming public school teachers, preventing election fraud, tracking animal abusers, opioid-related crime and more.

[Europe's largest home appliance maker puts \\$250 million US investment](#) (Business Insider/Reuters analysis) -- Sweden's Electrolux, Europe's largest home appliance maker with U.S. headquarters in Charlotte, said it would delay a planned \$250 million investment in Tennessee, after US President Donald Trump announced tariffs on imported aluminum and steel.

[TRAVIS FAIN: How 'North Carolina' got erased from Atlantic Coast Pipeline fund](#) (WRAL-TV analysis) -- Instead of the money flowing to the state it would go into an escrow fund designated by the governor. Repeated references to "the state of North Carolina" were edited to "the governor of the state of North Carolina." The reason? Cooper and his administration don't trust the Republican-controlled General Assembly.

[What we don't know hurts us on gun issue](#) (Greensboro News & Record) -- The arguments after the latest school shooting are all too predictable and all too polarized.

[STEPHANIE CARSON: NC Lawmakers Consider Requiring No Training for Concealed Carry](#) (Public News Service analysis) -- Just as young people are leading the charge to change the nation's gun laws, North Carolina lawmakers are poised to pass a bill that would allow adults with no training and no background checks to carry a concealed weapon. House Bill 746 has already passed initial readings in the Senate and House, and is expected to come up

Carolínians Against Gun Violence, said people should be alarmed.

[SUE STURGIS: Breaking the gun lobby's hold on state politics](#) (Facing South analysis) -- In the 2016 election cycle, total amount the National Rifle Association contributed to congressional candidates: just over \$1 million. In that same election cycle, total amount the NRA contributed to state-level politics, according to data from the National Institute on Money in State Politics: more than \$8.3 million. Between 1990 and today, total amount the group has contributed to state-level politics: over \$17 million.

[Full ballot means a hot election to come](#) (Fayetteville Observer) -- Even before the serious campaigning begins, it's safe to predict — maybe even guarantee — that this year's election is going to be a barn-burner. Interest is running as high as we've seen for a mid-term election. It's clear that the voting public is already energized after a full term of turbulence in the General Assembly and a chaotic first year of the Trump administration. Both of the major political parties have lived up to their promises of competing for every General Assembly seat

[Election security is essential](#) (Fayetteville Observer) -- We know we'll have busy ballots in this year's primary and general elections. We know we'll have important choices to make. We know that this could be a pivotal year in American politics, so our vote — and our political involvement — is essential. What we don't know is whether our ballots and the entire electoral system is secure and safe from outside meddling and mischief.

[MEL UMBARGER: N.C. a cautionary tale for tax cuts, new series shows](#) (N.C. Policy Watch analysis) -- New evidence shows that North Carolina's economy fell behind other states in the Southeast after cutting taxes, while locking in harmful cuts for schools and widening racial inequalities in the state. A billion dollar shortfall looms in 2020. These are the main points of a new blog series released today from the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities.

[SCOTT SEXTON: Legislators join push to overturn short-sighted bridge naming policy](#) (Winston-Salem Journal column) -- A letter sent last week to the N.C. Board of Transportation — signed by all seven state representatives and senators from Forsyth County — is simple and its language straightforward

[JIM HART: Richard Hudson Needed to Relate the Fuller Picture](#) (Southern Pines Pilot column) -- U.S. Rep. Richard Hudson recently visited Pinehurst to speak to the Moore County Republican Men's Club. It's a shame he chose not to include a wider range of an audience — like women, Democrats, independents, or just the average Moore County resident.

[HUNTER INGRAM: With talk of 10,000-foot trains, can Wilmington avoid traffic gridlock?](#) (Wilmington Star-News analysis) -- Officials fear the long trains could snarl roadways throughout the Port City

[Dog fighting: an informant's story](#) (New Bern Sun Journal analysis) -- This is the third part of a five-part series on dog fighting in the area. Previous stories ran Feb. 25 and Feb. 28. Part 4 on March 7 will focus on a 2011 dog-fighting case from Pamlico and Jones counties, and Part 5 on March 11 will focus on what you can do. ... The crime of dog fighting — a felony in all 50 states — is huge.

North Carolina is probably the biggest American hotspot of all. Lenoir County particularly heavy. ... :People whose whole life is breeding, raising, fighting pit bulls.

[TIM WHITE: Tracking animal abusers may save human lives](#) (Fayetteville Observer column) -- Have I mentioned lately that I'm a softie for animals? Yeah, I thought so. Maybe more often than some of you want to hear. But this isn't about my five dogs, or my two cats, or even about the cute little bottom-feeding catfish who's lived longer than any cute little bottom-feeding catfish I've ever had in my aquarium and who now measures about 13 inches.

[DANIELLE BATTAGLIA: Prosecutors identify first 16 Rockingham cases to be reviewed for errors](#) (Greensboro News & Record analysis) -- A state computer software flagged nearly 400 cases of 96 defendants assigned to former Rockingham County District Attorney Craig Blitzer during his tenure. His staff narrowed that number to 16 people.

[Reconsider WWII monument; it's ours, too](#) (Elizabeth City Daily Advance) -- Despite disagreeing strongly with the decision, we do understand the underlying motive a majority of Elizabeth City city councilors had for recently rejecting an agreement to install a Russian-funded monument at the city's Coast Guard Park: anger at the Russian government for attempting to hack our elections.

EDUCATION

[One-on-One with Lt. Gov. Dan Forest](#) (Education Matters analysis) -- North Carolina Lt. Gov. Dan Forest discusses top education issues including school safety and arming teachers, digital learning, school choice and the state of public education.

[CELIA RIVENBARK: Quick! Two scoops. No, make it four](#) (Wilmington Star-News column) -- Let's just cut to the chase and stipulate that arming classroom teachers, aides, lunchroom ladies, janitors, etc., is the dumbest idea since the Snuggie. It seriously makes that blanket with sleeves look like the discovery of penicillin, amiright?

[ALLEN JOHNSON: School protests should make us proud ... and ashamed](#) (Greensboro News & Record column) -- In the cradle of the sit-in movement, where four college freshmen made history by sitting down, hundreds of high school students in Greensboro on Feb. 23 made their point by walking out.

[BRIAN WUDKWYCH: Arming educators idea gains little traction with county officials grappling with school security](#) (Greenville Daily Reflector analysis) -- While North Carolina grapples with improving school security in the wake of another mass shooting, most Pitt County Board of Education members are lining up against a suggestion coming from the highest levels: arming teachers.

[ALEX GRANADOS: Reaching students when they are young](#) (EdNC analysis) -
- Alex Granados talks with Cindy Watkins, president of the N.C. Partnership for Children about the importance of early-childhood education, how to ensure long-term results from pre-K programs, and the future of early-childhood

[VALERIE STRAUSS: Teachers are now being asked to punch time clocks. What does that mean for their profession?](#) (Washington Post analysis) -- Many see it as a further step in the de-professionalization of teaching.

[KYLIE MOORE: How Charlotte Mecklenburg Library plans to become "essential"](#) (Charlotte Agenda column) -- I've said it before and I'll say it again -- I'm a Charlotte Mecklenburg Library power user. But I had to wonder: Do people still do that? "The answer to all of your questions is 'yes,'" Cordelia Anderson, marketing director for the library, told me when I asked about whether membership numbers and physical checkouts remained strong despite new elements like Kindles. "Over the years, it has gone up, it has gone down, but right now, overall, it's an upward trend that we've been following since the recession."

[Pinecrest to Pilot New College-Prep Strategy](#) (Southern Pines Pilot analysis) -- Students who aren't considered college bound in ninth grade may be so far behind that it still isn't an option when senior year and college application season roll around.

[KATE IRBY & BRIAN MURPHY: The FBI investigates college basketball recruiting, now Congress is too](#) (McClatchy News analysis) -- The NCAA men's basketball tournament begins in two weeks, just as a congressional investigation into recruiting practices at some of the most successful, best-known programs in the country is tipping off, too. Talk about March Madness.

[NCAA needs to clean up its act](#) (Norfolk Virginian-Pilot) -- An FBI investigation into the seedy side of college basketball apparently includes a number of top schools expected to compete in this year's NCAA basketball tournament.

HEALTH

[JOHN MURAWSKI: Blue Cross reports first ACA profit, wiping out 3 years of losses](#) (Durham Herald-Sun) -- Blue Cross and Blue Shield, the state's largest health insurer, reported its first profit ever on the Affordable Care Act, netting about \$600 million last year on customers the company covers under the federal health care law. Blue Cross reported its financials Thursday and said its ACA profit helped drive a company-wide net income of \$734 million last year. In addition to the half-million people Blue Cross covers under the ACA, the company provides insurance through large and small employers and also administers North Carolina's State Health Plan, for a customer total of 3.8 million people.

[THOMAS GOLDSMITH: Opioid-related Crime Takes Toll on Older People Across NC](#) (N.C. Health News analysis) -- North Carolina's opioid epidemic is putting major burdens on many older residents, their families, law enforcement, social services and other parts of society. In some cases, cash-strapped older people are selling their own prescriptions to finance late-life existence.

ENERGY & ENVIRONMENT

[TAFT WIREBACK: Municipal group and Duke Energy strike an LED deal](#) (Greensboro News & Record) -- The N.C. League of Municipalities and Duke Energy Carolinas have reached an agreement that should make it

and boost safety by modernizing their street lighting with LED fixtures. The agreement alters the utility's proposed rate hike by lowering municipal lighting costs by about \$2 million and by enabling communities to stretch the cost of transitioning to LED lighting over a longer period without penalties.

[MARK FLEMING: Duke Energy's rate increase deserves a closer look](#) (Greensboro News & Record column) -- Duke should explain how it will spend the money it wants to raise on higher rates, other than on coal-ash clean-up.

... AND MORE

[KEITH JARRETT: Former MLB player Sammy Stewart dies at the age of 63](#) (Hendersonville Times-News obit) -- It was a life of incredibly rewarding athletic achievements and of incredibly low moments of drug addiction and prison stints. Sammy Stewart won a World Series title with the Baltimore Orioles and was stabbed in the back and shot at in Buncombe County drug dens. And those wildly different phases of his life has ended at age 63.

[Ex-O's Pitcher Stewart, Who Fell on Hard Times, Dies at 63](#) (AP/New York Times obit) -- Former Baltimore pitcher Sammy Stewart, who helped the Orioles win the 1983 World Series before falling into a life of crack cocaine addiction and arrests, has died. He was 63. The Henderson County Sheriff's Office said Stewart was found dead Friday at a residence. No cause for his death had been determined. Known as the "Throwin' Swannanoan" for his hometown in North Carolina, Stewart became an instant hit in Baltimore.

[JEFF HAMPTON: Cargo ship loses more than 70 containers off Outer Banks](#) (Norfolk Virginian-Pilot analysis) -- The Coast Guard warned mariners that 70 cargo containers fell off of a cargo ship Saturday night, about 17 miles off Oregon Inlet. The cargo ship Maersk Shanghai told the Coast Guard by radio that it lost about 70- 73 cargo containers due to high winds and heavy seas. The Coast Guard urges all mariners to travel the area with caution. The North Carolina Department of Transportation closed N.C. 12 on Hatteras Island from Bonner Bridge south.

[MICK SCOTT: My home is Winston-Salem](#) (Winston-Salem Journal column) -- Some mornings I wake up, look out the window and feel happily surprised at my life. I wasn't supposed to be here. Middle-aged, in pretty good health, with food in the fridge and love and friendship and more books on my shelves than I can ever actually read — I'm a rich man. I've come a long way from when I washed dishes and lived in a garage apartment in Beaumont, Texas, and there have been quite a few twists and turns to land me here, as the Journal's new editorial page editor.

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